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Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

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Wednesday, 16 April 2014, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu	(Nigeria)
Members:	Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
	Australia	Mr. Quinlan
	Chad	Mr. Cherif
	Chile	Mr. Llanos
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Araud
	Jordan	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
	Republic of Korea	Ms. Paik Ji-ah
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine in the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Ivan Šimonović.

Mr. Šimonović: The Security Council was briefed this weekend on the latest political developments in Ukraine. As the Council requested, my briefing today will address the human rights situation in Ukraine and give an update on developments since my last briefing, on 19 March (see S/PV.7144). I will highlight key human rights issues, taking into account the most recent events in the East. My remarks are based on the findings of my two recent missions to Ukraine, as well as on the first few weeks of the activities of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine. At the outset, I wish to emphasize the strong interlinkages between the chronic human rights violations in Ukraine, the Maidan protests and the current situation in the east.

Almost a third of the population in Ukraine reportedly lives under the poverty line. Huge disparities in standards of living and inadequate access to basic social services, attributed to corruption and mismanagement, were among the underlying factors that led to the Maidan protests. The protests that started in Kyiv and swept across the rest of the country from November 2013 to February 2014 revealed a deep-rooted sense of dissatisfaction among the people of Ukraine.

The violence by the security forces against pro-European peaceful protesters in Kyiv on 30 November 2013 created outrage and led to the radicalization of the protests and to clashes between the protesters and police. Legislation that curtailed the freedoms of expression and assembly and enhanced a sense of impunity on the part of the police was rushed through the Rada in mid-January and led to violent action by some radical protesters, as well.

Progress is still to be made in bringing to justice the perpetrators of serious human rights violations committed during the period of the Maidan protests. During the protests, 121 persons were killed and more than 100 persons are still unaccounted for. The Office of the Prosecutor-General has initiated criminal proceedings, and it is important to ensure accountability for the perpetrators.

During the Maidan protests, there were some expressions of national, racial or religious hatred by certain groups and individuals. Some attacks against the ethnic Russian community, in particular ethnic Russians affiliated with the former Government, were also reported. However, those attacks were neither systematic nor widespread. They were isolated incidents, which were then exaggerated through biased media reporting, fuelling fear and insecurity among the ethnic Russian community.

There have also been some cases of incitement to hatred from right-wing extremists' groups, such as the so-called Right Sector. Fear and insecurity proliferate when incitement to hatred, discrimination and violence are not curtailed. It is therefore crucial that that issue be addressed as a matter of priority. I welcome the steps already undertaken by the Government and the Office of the Prosecutor-General of Ukraine to publicly condemn and investigate any such instances. In that context, it is clearly unacceptable that one presidential candidate calls his followers to arm themselves to defend the east of the country, while another is beaten because of his political views. Monitors are verifying those serious allegations.

My visit from 21 to 22 March was the most recent visit to Crimea by a senior United Nations official. During my mission, I interacted with a wide range of interlocutors, including local authorities and civil society, and especially the victims themselves. That allowed me to obtain a first-hand impression of the situation.

The media manipulation significantly contributed to a climate of fear and insecurity in the period preceding the referendum. The presence of paramilitary and so-called self-defence groups, as well as soldiers

in uniform without insignia, was not conducive to an environment in which voters could freely exercise their right to hold opinions and to freedom of expression during the referendum on 16 March. There were credible allegations of harassment, arbitrary arrests and torture by those groups, which targeted activists and journalists who did not support the referendum.

In reiterating General Assembly resolution 68/262, on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, I stress the obligations of the authorities in Crimea to respect international human rights norms. It is also of concern that, on 11 April, the authorities in Crimea rushed through the adoption of a new Constitution. The Crimean Tatar Majlis has raised important human rights concerns about the complete lack of public debate, as well as the exclusion of the Crimean Tatars, from the drafting process of the new Constitution. Concerns over citizenship issues also continue to be raised, in particular with regard to the fact that those who do not accept Russian citizenship will reportedly face many obstacles in guaranteeing their property and land rights, access to education and health care and the enjoyment of other civil and political rights.

When I visited eastern Ukraine in March, the situation was already very tense. Meanwhile, the situation has significantly deteriorated. Reportedly, armed pro-Russian activists established the People's Republic of Donetsk, taking control of a number of Government buildings in several cities of the Donetsk region, using violence, including against law enforcement officers. In Luhansk pro-Russian protesters continue to occupy the local building of the security services. In Kharkiv participants in a pro-Ukrainian rally were attacked and beaten by pro-Russian demonstrators, who broke through the police cordon, resulting in some 50 persons being injured.

Ongoing incidents and clashes among various groups of protesters, as well as with security forces, are of serious concern. While reports indicate that the number of protesters, including some allegedly from outside the region, has not significantly increased — and we are speaking of a couple of thousand — the level of violence and the proportion of armed protesters have. That has significant human rights implications.

While protest-related human rights violations need to be investigated and verified urgently, security forces must play their role in maintaining public order in accordance with human rights standards. There are clear lines between what can be considered the exercise of the right to peaceful assembly and the violent behaviour of armed protesters. However, in all cases, security forces should not use force unnecessarily or excessively.

The situation in the east, if not adequately addressed as a matter of priority, risks seriously destabilizing the country as a whole. Those who exercise influence over the situation should take immediate action to halt the violence. The arming of the protesters and their transformation into quasi-paramilitary forces must be stopped. Anyone inciting violence and providing arms to protesters can be held accountable for the resulting tragic consequences.

In order to de-escalate tensions across the country, all parties should be encouraged to start an inclusive, sustained and meaningful national dialogue based on respect for the legal obligations of Ukraine under the international human rights treaties already ratified. Such a process should take into consideration the concerns of all those who live in Ukraine, including minorities, and address issues such as language rights and the decentralization of the country.

Finally, I cannot stress enough the important role that accurate human rights reporting can play in preventing violence and defusing tensions. Yesterday, we issued our first report on the human rights situation in Ukraine on the basis of my two visits and the first month of human rights monitoring. We intend to issue our second report on 15 May. Anyone with relevant information on human rights violations should share it with us, so that we can verify it, further investigate if necessary and include it in our next report.

The President: I thank Mr. Šimonović for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Security Council.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I wish to thank the Nigerian presidency for organizing this public briefing. I would also like to convey my appreciation to Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović for his briefing.

The report presented on 15 April by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights squarely refutes Russia's inflammatory narrative, which it uses to justify its illegal actions in Ukraine. While the report points out that Ukraine suffered from human rights violations, lack of accountability,

corruption and mismanagement of resources, as well as a lack of a system of checks and balances and a lack of free elections, the blame is placed on the previous regime.

The report indicates that underlying human rights violations were among the root causes of the popular protests that led to a change in Government. The adoption of restrictive anti-protest laws and the excessive use of force by Berkut special police and other security forces under Yanukovich transformed a peaceful demonstration and led to the violence and deaths that ensued. The report indicates, however, that since the current Government took power at the end of February, tensions have decreased, along with the allegations of human rights violations.

In Crimea, the main concerns are linked to the Russian-sponsored developments leading to and the situation after the so-called referendum, which has had a direct impact on the enjoyment of human rights by local inhabitants, especially the indigenous Tatar community, who chose to boycott the referendum. Their situation has just been described. Many people may be forced to leave their homes and face other consequences arising from Crimea's takeover. That is also confirmed by the special monitoring mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The report also highlights the highly questionable character of the referendum, which was held in an environment of intimidation by armed groups and a total lack of media freedom. As Council members will recall, the plebiscite was organized in a particularly hurried manner, in the absence of established election practices and election observation, without a public debate on its merits and provided exclusively for a secessionist option.

The report indicates too that in eastern Ukraine grievances with regard to the failure of the central Government to represent interests have a history long predating the current Government. The report also states that violations of the human rights of the ethnic minorities in eastern Ukraine, Crimea and elsewhere in Ukraine have been neither widespread nor systematic. That is clearly confirmed by the most recent statement by United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák, who has concluded that the overwhelming majority of minorities and others described harmonious inter-ethnic and interfaith relations and conditions of non-discrimination in all spheres of life. She stated that

> "The current human rights situation of minorities in Ukraine and the civil and political, economic, social and cultural conditions ... cannot justify any violent actions or incitement ... by any party, national or international".

That is exactly what we have been saying all along. Whatever the issues regarding the human and minority rights situation in Ukraine, Crimea or eastern Ukraine in particular, none of those issues can ever justify the invasion and annexation of Crimea or the ongoing destabilization of eastern Ukraine. Those issues could, and should have been, resolved by way of established and well-tried peaceful instruments, with the assistance of regional organizations such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, as well as the United Nations.

Furthermore, the report notes that there are today positive changes under way in Ukraine, or under consideration, such as a willingness to break with past injustices and to elaborate a new vision of the country. Those conclusions, contained in the report, are confirmed by the current Government's efforts to strengthen the rule of law, combat corruption, ensure minority rights and address the issue of decentralization. In fact, acting President Turchynov recently proposed holding a referendum on the decentralization of the country together with the national elections to be held on 25 May.

All of the foregoing points to the fact that the crisis provoked in Ukraine is not about the protection of one particular ethnic minority or language minority, or about Ukraine's alleged extremist radicalism. But we knew that all along as well, as various previous conclusions by senior international representatives, including those of the OSCE, have repeatedly repudiated such allegations. Among other things, this is about Ukraine's destabilization with a view to obstructing and preventing the 25 May elections, which the interim Government in Kyiv announced the minute it was appointed, for fear that power may slip out of the fingers of the likes of Yanukovic and his corrupt cronies.

This is also about a naked land grab and Russia's greater political and military ambitions. In a disturbing instance of déjà vu, once again in clear violation of Ukraine's Constitution and accepted norms of international behaviour, heavily armed militants without any insignia are occupying local Government buildings and declaring independence, which is a sad

caricature of self-determination in defiance of national and international law.

Furthermore, the systematic and well-oiled propaganda war against Ukraine and its provisional leadership is an extremely dangerous game, because as we have seen time and again from various situations around the world, including recently in the Central African Republic, it is much too easy to release the arms-wielding genie out of the bottle, a genie of incitement and hate, but infinitely more difficult to contain it afterwards.

We therefore urge the Russian side to stop its disinformation and anti-Ukrainian and anti-European propaganda campaign before it is too late. International bodies, Europe and Ukraine have repeatedly called for the path of restraint and dialogue. The way towards that path are still open as we await the holding of the quadrilateral meeting to take place in Geneva on 17 April. We once again call on the Russian Federation to pursue that path.

Much remains to be done for the current and future Governments of Ukraine. Fighting corruption — and we welcome the fact that the relevant legislation is now being put in place to improve access to education, health and social services — providing real equality for all its citizens, addressing the deficiencies of the justice system and combating impunity, which was so common in the country, are the main issues of concern where the international community, including the United Nations, the OSCE and the Council of Europe again can readily provide further assistance.

Impartial reporting on human rights violations will help to prevent the manipulation of information by whomever. We therefore support continuous reporting by the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine to ensure a regular and continuous flow of updates on the situation in the country. We also have to provide necessary mid- and long-term funding for the mission going well beyond June. The mission must continue its work throughout the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea.

Other human rights monitoring instruments are also necessary. We look forward to receiving the findings of the visit to Ukraine by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues from 7 to 13 April. We welcome equests by other thematic mandate holders under the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, such as the Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons, to visit Ukraine and report on their findings.

It is also crucial to ensure independent monitoring of the human rights situation in Crimea specifically. We call on the occupying authorities to allow the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine to work in Crimea, including the opening of a sub-office in Simferopol. United Nations officials should continue to visit Crimea and report on the situation of all ethnic minorities, on media freedom and human rights.

The people of Russia and Ukraine have become victims of the propaganda and disinformation that provoked and fanned unconstitutional actions by local militants, with external assistance. The situation is very tense, but a reversal of course is still possible. It is time to heed the countless calls to de-escalate and for Moscow to stop interfering into Ukraine's internal affairs.

The current Government is set to address human rights violations, language policy, the rights of ethnic minorities, the decentralization of power and corruption, and to strengthen accountability and the rule of law. It is in our common interests that this Government and the future Government of Ukraine should be allowed to carry out that work unobstructed. We must also support its efforts to ensure that a free and fair election on 25 May, with the participation of all Ukraine in all its rich diversity, can take place.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The recent events in south-east Ukraine are of great concern. On 13 April, having convened an emergency meeting of the Security Council (see S/PV.7154), the Russian delegation has insistently called upon a number of members of the Council to use all tools available to them to prevent the use of force in the crisis in the eastern regions of Ukraine. In response, we have heard a number of ambiguous statements, with some delegations expressing their understanding for the plans of the Ukrainian authorities to use force against their fellow countrymen. The result is obvious.

Those who usurped power in Kyiv through a violent Government coup have now taken the route of ignoring the legitimate demands of the inhabitants of south-eastern Ukraine and exercising the unconstitutional use of military force in order to pacify their own people, whom they blasphemously call bandits and terrorists. Such reckless steps are fraught with the potential to unleash a real civil war in Ukraine. The first blood has

already been shed. The citizens of the south-east have repeatedly warned the authorities that they are ready to act as human shields. In a number of areas regular units of the Ukrainian army and internal forces have openly refused to shoot at their fellow countrymen. There have been cases where soldiers have gone over to the side of the people. Is that not why the self-proclaimed leaders of Kyiv are deploying the right-wing militants and other illegal militias behind whose bayonets they actually came to power? For example, people in black uniforms — not belonging to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence or internal troops — were sent into Kramatorsk. Who do those elements answer to? Of course, it is hardly likely that anyone can have any illusions about the independence of Kyiv's actions. And that raises the question that perhaps the coup scenario for Kyiv was suggested by the countries whose senior emissaries are constantly whispering things in the ears of the Ukrainian leaders they sponsor.

The recipe for a way out of the massive internal political crisis afflicting Ukraine is both simple and complicated. The Ukrainians must launch a dialogue, provided that it is inclusive and comprehensive. Every region and political force in the country, without exception, should participate in it on equal terms and with the same right to decisions on the pressing issues. All of that should be reflected in a thoroughly reformed Constitution that Ukraine's multiethnic society would perceive as trustworthy, based on a foundation of a legitimate Government with a long-term perspective. Without that, it will be difficult for Ukraine to remain unified or resolve its current tangle of urgent problems. The plan is to make this subject the main topic at the Geneva meeting, which for now is still on the agenda, and it should be the basic task of the international community when it expresses its concern about what is happening in Ukraine. It must be made to begin genuine constitutional reform, not a cosmetic version.

Right now it is vital that we receive accurate information about what is happening in Ukraine. If the internationalists want to justify their presence in the country, they should assess the evolving situation objectively and impartially. Unfortunately, the report published yesterday by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights suggests the opposite. The document is one-sided and biased. Its drafters preferred not to notice that the current authorities in Ukraine acquired that status through an armed coup, not civilized democratic elections. Attacks by illegal armed security groups and the pillaging of administrative buildings by radicals miraculously qualify in the report as peaceful protests, while demonstrations by Ukrainian citizens in the country's eastern regions are declared to be illegal acts. The report states credulously that the Ukrainian Government is apparently firmly committed to breaking with past injustices and elaborating a new vision for Ukraine's future. It omits inconvenient facts that testify to the fact that from day one this Government's activities have been carried out in an atmosphere of violence and lawlessness that it has itself created.

The report gives no attention whatever to the highly dangerous trend towards the uncontrolled growth of aggressive nationalism and neo-Nazism. In fact, the term "neo-Nazism" is delicately not used at all. The raging chauvinism in western and central Ukraine whipped up by right-wing and other far-right groups is presented only in the characterization the right of minorities to participate in political life is not fully taken into account. Nothing is said of the public calls to incite national hatred and even destroy the Russian population. The pronouncements of the leader of the parliamentary Freedom party refer to liberating Ukraine from the so-called Moskal'sko-Zhidovskaia mafia — for those who have not heard this gangster slang before, it means Russians and Jews. I would like to recall that this individual, according to the Simon Wiesenthal Center, appears in fifth place on the list of the most rabid anti-Semites in Europe. For all practical purposes, this party is now in charge of the military and other forces in Kyiv.

Those who foment incitement to murder and violence based on ethnicity are criminals. They should be promptly arrested and brought to justice in compliance with Ukraine's international obligations, including in the area of human rights, not acting as the backbone of the National Guard and the current ruling elite. Despite the fact that the report rightly calls Ukrainian society bilingual, the true position of the Russian-speaking population is not reflected in it at all. We should remember that at different times they are referred to as non-natives, a minority, aliens, invaders. The Russian language is gradually being pushed out of circulation.

There have been numerous cases of harassment and of Ukrainian nationalists and radicals' use of physical violence against representatives of the former authorities as well as those who simply disagree with the current regime. In recent examples, on 7 April

participants in a congress of justices were mocked and insulted. On the night of 15 April the headquarters of the Communist Party of Ukraine in Sumy was destroyed. Unfortunately, the authors of the report preferred to ignore this scandalous evidence of the lawless acts of supporters of the current regime in Kyiv. Instead, it is packed with references to the testimony of various anonymous witnesses who saw or heard something, somewhere. The report's assessment of the situation as it relates to freedom of speech and the press does not stand up to scrutiny. As if the Ukrainian authorities' continued attempts to hinder objective coverage of the situation, their threats against and intimidation of journalists, their refusal to allow representatives of foreign media into the country did not exist. Concern about this situation has been expressed not only by credible non-governmental organizations such as Reporters without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists, but also by the European Commission. How can we possibly talk about respect for human rights and the rule of law if even presidential candidates in Ukraine — Oleg Tsarev and Mikhail Dobkin — are being attacked, and Ukraine's Parliament has finally been turned into a type of might-makes-right democracy?

With regard to the OHCHR report and today's baseless fabrications by Mr. Šimonović about the situation in Crimea, that region has declared itself a subject of the Russian Federation and therefore cannot in principle be an object of the discussion in today's meeting on the situation in Ukraine, and would not serve the purposes of that discussion. We get the impression that the report was fabricated based on conclusions formulated in advance whose political orientation Mr. Šimonović expressed in a statement about the results of his first visit to Ukraine in March. In general, we are obliged to conclude that the report undermines the credibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as an impartial defender of human rights. We will continue to closely monitor the work of the mission. Let us see how its future reports reflect the violence being unleashed on the south-east of the country thanks to the Kyiv authorities.

We advise all who champion human rights in this country through deeds rather than words to pay special attention to the actions of Kyiv's self-proclaimed authorities, who threaten the east and south-east with enforced pacification, inflicting brutal, massive violations of human rights, especially on the Russian and Russian-speaking populations of those regions.

Mr. Cherif (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for his briefing.

Chad remains deeply concerned about the situation in Ukraine, which has been marked by human rights violations and violence likely to be lead to unforeseeable and incalculable consequences. Chad condemns every form of human rights violations and violence, wherever they come from. We ask that an independent inquiry be carried out to determine the respective responsibilities of the various parties in the human rights violations that have been committed. However, we believe that it is difficult to clarify the situation with regard to human rights violations without a modicum of stability and a reduction of the prevailing tensions.

We therefore call on all the parties to exercise restraint and calm and urge them once again to give priority to finding a peaceful settlement of the crisis. We believe that a political solution is possible within the framework of direct and candid negotiations among the relevant parties, mindful of the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the concerns of all components of Ukrainian society in all their diversity. Accordingly, we encourage all the parties to give negotiations a chance and to back the mediation efforts currently under way. We hope that the meeting scheduled for 17 April in Geneva will enable us to make progress in our search for a solution to the crisis.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Mr. Šimonović for his briefing today. I would also like to thank him and the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine for producing the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published yesterday.

The United Kingdom welcomes the report and its findings. To date, it is the most comprehensive and independent assessment of the human rights situation in Ukraine since the onset of the crisis. It is therefore an important contribution to our discussions on the situation in Ukraine. Attempts to discredit the report as biased or politically motivated, as my Russian colleague has just done, lack all credibility.

The OHCHR report is clear: human rights violations were a root cause of the popular protests that began in November last year. The report found that since the change of Government in late February, allegations

of human rights violations had decreased. But we do not underestimate the magnitude of the task ahead. In that regard, it is encouraging that the OHCHR report finds "clear indications of a willingness by the present Government to ensure a break with past injustices and to elaborate a new vision for Ukraine's future". The United Kingdom is fully committed to supporting Ukraine in that endeavour.

The OHCHR report comprehensively refutes assertions made by the Russian Federation in the Chamber and elsewhere to justify its illegal intervention in Ukraine. I will give just three examples.

First, on 1 March, President Putin requested authority to use Russia's armed forces in Ukraine on the basis that there was "a threat to the lives of citizens of the Russian Federation, our compatriots and the personnel of the armed forces". That oft-repeated claim underpinned Russia's justification for military intervention in Ukraine. But the OHCHR report concludes that in fact attacks against the ethnic Russian community in Ukraine were "neither systematic nor widespread". It further assesses that "Russian-speakers have not been subject to threats in Crimea". That finding supports those of other independent authorities, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, who also found no evidence of violations or threats to the lives of Russian-speakers.

Secondly, Russia bases its justification for the illegal annexation of Crimea on the legitimacy of the 16 March referendum. On 18 March, in his address to the Russian Duma, President Putin said, "a referendum was held in Crimea on 16 March in full compliance with democratic procedures and international norms". In stark contrast to that bold assertion, the report concludes that

> "the presence of paramilitary and so-called self-defence groups as well as soldiers in uniform without insignia, widely believed to be from the Russian Federation, was not conducive to an environment in which voters could freely exercise their right to hold opinions and the right to freedom of expression".

The report also states, "the OHCHR delegation received many reports of vote rigging", including cases of non-Ukrainian citizens participating in the referendum, as well as individuals voting numerous times in different locations. Overall, the report expresses "serious concern about violations of the civil and political rights of the inhabitants of Crimea". It cites cases of abduction, unlawful arrest and detention, harassment and violence against peaceful demonstrators, arbitrary arrest and torture. It also expresses deep concern at the consequences of introducing Russian citizenship and estimates that 3,000 Crimean Tatars have been displaced.

Lastly, the report contains damning evidence that Russia has used propaganda and misinformation to exacerbate tensions and destabilize Ukraine. It says that the Russian State television and radio broadcasting company has been "disguising information about Kyiv events" in an attempt to justify Crimea's return to the Russian Federation. Moreover, the report states that greatly exaggerated stories and misinformed reports were "systematically used to create a climate of fear and insecurity" to support Russia's case for the annexation of Crimea.

Turning to current events, the United Kingdom fully supports the right of freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. Those Ukrainians who wish to demonstrate against the Government are entitled to do so, provided that they do so peacefully. But there is a line. Well-equipped paramilitary units armed with automatic weapons are not peaceful protesters. A legitimate sovereign State must insist on a monopoly of the use of force. We express particular concern as Mr. Šimonović did in his briefing today about the arming of protesters and their transformation into quasi-paramilitary forces.

Yesterday, the Ukrainian Government began an operation to restore law and order in Donetsk, in eastern Ukraine. The Ukrainian Prime Minister stated that operations would proceed gradually, responsibly and prudently. The Foreign Minister emphasized that the operations were initiated only after all other means to resolve the situation had been exhausted. We have received assurances that the operation will comply fully with Ukrainian and international law, safeguard human rights and uphold Ukraine's international obligations.

The Ukrainian Government has acted responsibly throughout the crisis, even in the face of immense provocation, not least the illegal annexation of its territory and despite continuing interference from Russia. We therefore have confidence that Ukrainian security forces will continue to act proportionately and in the interests of all citizens of Ukraine.

We have heard from the Permanent Representative of Russia today a new fantasy narrative about developments in eastern Ukraine. I have no doubt that future independent reports from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will prove that new narrative to be as false as the Russian narrative on Crimea has comprehensively been shown to be.

We remind Russia that it cannot use the situation in Ukraine, for which it bears significant responsibility, as a pretext for further illegal military activity.

Our appeal to Russia is simple: stop interfering in the internal affairs of Ukraine, move your troops away from Ukraine's borders, rescind the authorization to use military force in Ukraine and enter into dialogue. The European Union wants to see Russia as a partner, as a friend and as an ally. A stable, peaceful and prosperous Ukraine is just as much in Russia's interest as it is in our own. Rather than pursuing a strategy of destabilization, Russia should take its place at the negotiating table and environment xplain its concerns. We hope that the quadrapartite talks scheduled for 17 April will provide just such an opportunity.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for his briefing today and for his diligent work on this controversial issue.

We meet today to discuss the work of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine and the timely report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. After weeks of Russian disinformation and propaganda, the report gives us yet another opportunity to focus on facts. The independent and impartial reporting we have heard today is essential to prevent the kind of distortions that may lead to further instability in an already combustible situation, a situation that continues to grow more dangerous every day.

Today's remarks by the representative of the Russian Federation, in which the independent report provided by the United Nations was disparaged — indeed, slandered as biased and unfounded — is deeply worrying. If we do not like the message, the Russian strategy appears to be, metaphorically, shoot the messenger. Even if those attacks are attacks on the entire international community, which asks the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide independent reporting, we urge the United Nations to continue to provide independent reporting and not to be deterred by slander and intimidation being practiced by those who do not like facts that have proven inconvenient and truths that credibly repute Russia's false and self-justifying claims.

Let us be clear: the actions the world witnessed in Crimea and the denials of Russian involvement in the lead up to its illegal annexation and occupation are repeating themselves in eastern Ukraine. Again, a region has been transformed almost overnight from a state of relative calm to manufactured unrest. Over the last several days, heavily armed pro-Russian separatists have seized the city administration, police stations and other Government buildings in 11 cities in Donetsk oblast. Every major city in the region has at least one building under occupation. It is clear that those actions were not a set of spontaneous events or home-grown, but rather a well-orchestrated professional campaign of incitement, separatism and sabotage of the Ukrainian State. And there is substantial evidence of involvement from Russia, which is now diverting attention from its own actions, its own territorial expansion, its own fear-mongering, by trying to change the subject. Well, it will not work.

The contrast between the actions of the Ukrainian Government and those of the Russian troops could not be starker. Ukrainian security forces have responded more carefully and in more measured ways to provocations in the east that would be difficult for any of us to accept in our own countries. The Ukrainian Government has repeatedly sought to negotiate with the armed groups that have seized public buildings and established unauthorized road blocks in eastern Ukraine, in an effort to resolve the situation peacefully through dialogue. Ukrainian officials have offered amnesty. We appreciate the Government's statements that any actions it undertakes will be gradual and responsible. Contrary to the conspiracy theories put forth by the Russian representative today, we continue to call for restraint, privately and publicly. Obviously, the best way to de-escalate the situation is for the armed militants to leave the buildings that they have seized.

While the report speaks to an earlier period in the crisis, it is important to note that even several weeks ago the monitoring mission had already received allegations that some of the people stoking unrest in the region were not Ukrainian citizens, but in fact agitators coming from the Russian Federation. Obviously, it is a critical question whether Russia is continuing its policy of seeking to destabilize and ultimately annex

land from its neighbour. For purposes of establishing the truth, it is essential that the United Nations human rights monitoring mission go forward with its work and that it have full access to every part of the country, including Crimea.

The United States commends the Ukraine Government for facilitating the mission's activities and for supporting the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) ongoing efforts to monitor every aspect of the scheduled 25 May elections.

Now let us consider some of the truths set forth in the High Commissioner's report. From December 2013 until February 2014, the Berkut special police and other elements of the federal security apparatus used excessive force against anti-Government protesters. That deadly violence did not end until former President Yanukovych abandoned his office and fled the country. Since late February when the new Government assumed office, evidence of human rights abuses has decreased dramatically, except in Crimea, where Russian policies threaten the rights of Ukrainians, Crimean Tatars and other minority groups. Let me emphasize that according to the new independent report, the only region of Ukraine that has suffered a rapid deterioration in human rights is the part over which the Government in Kyiv has least control. In Crimea, where the role of Russian authorities is as profound as it is illegal, journalists and human rights defenders have faced harassment and torture, censorship is common and the presence of paramilitary and soldiers "widely believed to be from the Russian Federation" has sharply inhibited freedom of expression. The report raises valid concerns about the introduction of Russian citizenship in a region that does not belong to Russia and about discrimination against Ukrainian citizens inside their own country and a plethora of practical issues related to property ownership, pensions, wages, health care, labour rights, education and access to justice.

The new report also examines the allegation repeated over and over again by Russian officials that there have been systematic attacks against ethnic Russians in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine and that Jewish communities have also come under threat. The reality is that there have been a few isolated incidents against individual members belonging to minority groups, and we should and do condemn those incidents. But the report makes clear that those incidents were neither widespread nor a reflection of Government policy. On the contrary, the report presents vivid evidence that the Ukraine Government has sought actively to safeguard the rights of all citizens within its jurisdiction.

It is revealing that while Russia has sought to deny the realities cited in the United Nations latest report, the leaders of Ukraine are making a good-faith effort to implement its recommendations. Among other initiatives, they are moving ahead with constitutional reform, plans to decentralize power, preparations for the election and initiatives to curb the corruption that flourished so blatantly under the former President. Overall, the new Government has acted with tremendous restraint under extraordinarily difficult conditions. There will always be more to do, but the allegation that the Government is primarily to blame for the present tensions is completely baseless.

Before moving to my conclusion, I want to draw on the even-handed recommendations in the United Nations human rights report in order to show that the charges against the United Nations are inaccurate. Among the report's recommendations to the Government of Ukraine are the following: ensure accountability for all human rights violations during the unrest, ensure inclusivity and equal participation in public affairs and political life, prevent media manipulation, combat intolerance and extremism and implement measures to eradicate corruption. The recommendations to the authorities in Crimea include: actively resolve cases of missing persons, take all measures needed to protect the rights of persons affected by the changing institutional and legal framework, including citizenship, disarm and disband paramilitary units and investigate hate speech and media manipulation. Those are not the recommendations of a biased report.

The release of the human rights monitoring report should remind us all of our responsibilities. The Government of Ukraine has a responsibility to continue its reform initiatives and to ensure inclusivity and respect for the human rights of all groups. The people of Ukraine have a duty to cooperate with their Government and fellow citizens in seeking to resolve disputes through peaceful means. The Russian Federation has an obligation to fulfil its commitments under international law, to respect the rights and the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine and to back its professed desire for stability with actions designed to achieve that goal, instead of its opposite. The Russian Federation must move its troops back from the border region, withdraw its forces from Crimea and cease all efforts to destabilize Ukraine.

The international community has a responsibility to support the people of Ukraine in their desire to build a strong and united country with a robust democracy and effective national and regional institutions. We have a collective responsibility as well to do all we can to prevent further bloodshed and to find a peaceful and just conclusion to what has been a tragic and unnecessary crisis. Tomorrow in Geneva, senior representatives from Ukraine, Russia, the European Union and the United States are scheduled to meet to discuss de-escalation, demobilization, support for elections and constitutional reform. My Government looks forward to participating in that meeting as an opportunity to resolve the crisis through diplomacy before it is too late.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for his briefing. China is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of the situation in Ukraine. We hope that all parties can remain calm, exercise restraint and prevent a further deterioration of the situation. The priority now is to work within the framework of law to resolve differences through dialogue and negotiation, with full consideration of the legitimate rights, interests and aspirations of all regions and ethnic communities. That is the only approach that can bring lasting peace and stability to Ukraine, in keeping with the long-term fundamental interests of the nation as a whole and all of its communities.

China views the issue of Ukraine as highly complex and believes that the only solution is to remain on the path to a political settlement, which requires a favourable external environment. China has been calling on the international community to work constructively through its good offices to de-escalate the situation in Ukraine. China has put forward a three-point proposal on seeking a political solution to the Ukrainian issue. We have taken note of the ongoing discussion on establishing a multilateral mechanism for dialogue. China welcomes those efforts, which are largely in line with the Chinese proposal.

China supports the early launch of dialogue and consultations among the relevant parties, based on full consideration and accommodation of all legitimate interests and concerns in order to find a definitive solution that is acceptable to all.

Mr. Quinlan (Australia): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and for his briefing. It is obviously very necessary that the Council give such careful focus on the human rights situation in Ukraine. We have heard repeated assertions about threats against particular groups, but we have seen little evidence to substantiate those assertions. Those claims have been used, however, as a justification for continuing interference in Ukraine's affairs, including the threat and use of force, contrary to the Charter of the United Nations.

As the Council, we need to be clear-eyed and responsible about the situation on the ground and the true nature of the challenges facing the Ukrainian people. The report of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission is what the Council needs to see at this critical point in such an unstable and dangerous environment. It seems to us to provide a balanced and neutral depiction of the human rights situation and a clear picture of the events leading to the Maidan protest, the situation prior to the referendum held on 16 March in Crimea, and the current situation both in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine.

Russia has made various assertions about the motivation of the Maidan protestors. The report makes clear that human rights violations were among the root causes of the demonstrations that took place throughout Ukraine and in particular in Kyiv. The protests were not driven by a so-called fascist agenda, but were a push for a more representative and effective Government. The heavy-handed response from security forces was a catalyst for their escalation. These actions of the security forces came against a backdrop of a long-standing culture of impunity for human rights violations, including by the police. We welcome reports that the new Ukrainian authorities have committed to investigating those violations and to holding perpetrators to account.

The report also sheds light on the events in Crimea. Russia has consistently argued that Russian-speaking minorities were threatened with repression. It has used that reasoning to justify its decision to take control of and annex Crimea. The report makes clear that there was no evidence of harassment or attacks on ethnic Russians in Crimea ahead of the referendum. Misinformed reports, however, of harassment of ethnic Russians by Ukrainian extremists served to create a climate of fear.

The report notes that since the referendum of 16 March, measures have been taken in Crimea that are of deep concern from a human rights perspective. Those include the introduction of Russian citizenship,

making it difficult for those who chose to maintain their Ukrainian citizenship to stay in Crimea and raising concerns about legal residency and the right to work.

As we heard at the 31 March Arria formula meeting of the Council, the situation is particularly concerning for Tatars. The report confirms that, noting that the number of displaced Crimean Tatars is estimated to have reached 3,000. The actions of paramilitary groups in Crimea remain outside the law and threatening. The report calls for their disbandment. It also emphasizes that independent and impartial reporting on human rights in Crimea would deter violations, stimulate accountability and prevent the spreading of rumours and political manipulation.

The report looks carefully at the situation of Russian minorities across Ukraine and finds nothing to support the claims by Russia about threats to them. Russia's claims on that point simply do not hold. The report clearly notes that although there were some attacks against the ethnic Russian community, in particular those affiliated with the previous Government, "these were neither systematic nor widespread". As Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović has just told the Council,

> "they were isolated incidents which were then exaggerated ... fuelling fear and insecurity among the ethnic Russian community".

The report does make good proposals, which we should all support, on the protection of minorities, including the recommendation to ensure that minority groups are consulted in developing laws on language and recommendations to ensure that the treatment of those associated with the previous Government is in accordance with the rule of law and not motivated by revenge. We welcome the Government of Ukraine's willingness to ensure a break with past injustices and create a better future for the people of Ukraine. Elections are essential in that regard, and it is crucial that the people of Ukraine be able to decide on the future direction of their own country. We therefore fully support the upcoming elections on 25 May and call on all parties in Ukraine and in the international community to support a free and fair ballot. Ukraine must be allowed to prepare for these elections without outside interference or any coercion in its domestic affairs.

To conclude, the international community has repeatedly urged Russia to actively reduce tensions, stop its destabilization in eastern Ukraine and withdraw its forces from the provocative posture they have assumed on Ukraine's border. Ukraine's own response has been restrained and responsible. The talks scheduled to take place tomorrow in Geneva between Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the European Union are a crucial opportunity, now, for genuine dialogue. The latest combustible events in eastern Ukraine — where, as Ambassador Churkin has said, that the first blood has been shed — make it essential that Russia engage seriously in this dialogue.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): The report before the Council is damning for two reasons. First, it describes in the harshest terms the sorry tale of years of corruption and abuse on the part of former President Yanukovych and his predatory and criminal team. Is it any wonder that the Ukrainian population, exasperated by years of incompetence and corruption, rose up in protest? There was no foreign involvement there. The report also describes how the regime responded to legitimate, peaceful demonstrations with the use of force.

The titanic task of restoring trust of all Ukrainians in their institutions lies with the new Ukrainian Adminstration. The report underscores that since the very first measures were undertaken by the new Administration, calm has returned to Kyiv. On the issue of languages and regional status, we encourage the Kyiv authorities to pursue their efforts to promote a return to reason, launch constructive and inclusive dialogue, and reassure the people regarding their place in Ukraine. The acting President has refused to repeal the law on official languages. This symbolic decision demonstates the will of the Ukrainian authorities to strive for the country's reconciliation. Ukraine can preserve the diversity that constitutes its richness and uniqueness.

To that end, Ukraine needs our support. The first stage — the holding of the presidential election on 25 May — is key. We must support the Ukrainian authorities in order for the election to be held in the best possible conditions and ensure the representation of all. We must move towards a free and transparent election, guaranteed by the presence of international observers. It would be unacceptable for the activities of violent groups to threaten the holding of that democratic step, which is essential to the country's future. We will not accept the result of that vote, the harbinger of great hope for the entire country, being disputed as result of any event devised from outside.

I now come to my second point. The report draws a bleak picture of the impact of Russia's actions on the situation inside Ukraine. It describes the chain of events that led to the annexation of Crimea. It once again underscores that there was no threat to the Russian-speaking population of Crimea, a defence that is nevertheless upheld by Russia to justify its intervention. Quite the opposite, the report underscores that the risk of human rights violations now threatens the Ukrainian and Tartar populations. The United Nations must continue to take note of the human rights situation in Crimea, which is an integral part of Ukraine, as the General Assembly recalled by an overwhelming majority.

The report also underscores that the deteriorating conditions and human rights violations that preceded the holding of the referendum in Crimea on 16 March were the result of deliberate acts. The presence of soldiers in uniform without insignia, the seizure of public buildings, intimidation of the civilian population, journalists and human rights activists, the presence of foreign voters and the violent propaganda against Kyiv broadcast on Russian television channels were all coordinated and orchestrated acts. They served as a prelude to an annexation unprecedented in the twenty-first century. Today, we are seeing a similar scenario in eastern Ukraine.

In that regard, I believe that all Council members and all my colleagues here in the Chamber read the excellent article in this morning's New York Times, which describes how Russia has established its own virtual reality, which bears no relation to the real situation. My Russian friend's statement today shows, I believe, just how accurate and how true to the reality that article is. Let us recall the past. Participants will perhaps recall being told of 600,000 refugeees fleeing the Ukrainian terror, who seem to have disappeared from one day to the next. We were told that there were no Russian soldiers in Crimea, while on YouTube we could see lorries with Russian army number plates.

Today, the same disinformation continues. We are told of peaceful protesters, while again on the Internet one can see that they are heavily armed militia. We are told that there is no Russian intervention, while again on the Internet one can see soldiers without insignia, flaunting weapons with which only the Russian army is equipped. We are told that a fascist terror prevails in Kyiv, while we know very well that if we were to go to Kyiv we would see that calm prevails. We are told that Jews in Ukraine are threatened, while the two Ukrainian Jewish organizations themselves say that they are not threatened. I could mention many more examples, but never was a statement clearly so far from the reality that, thanks to the Internet, we all can see on the computer.

Ukraine is cornered and under attack. On Sunday, right here, it was ordered not to react. One cannot imagine that it would suffer without reacting to the aggression to which it was first subjected a month ago, condemned by the General Assembly in resolution 68/262, and which it is again experiencing in the east of the country. We welcome the restraint of the Ukrainian security forces, who seek to respond in a proportional way to the unprecedented destabilizing actions against them, organized from abroad.

We call on Russia to commit to de-escalation and to condemning, together with the rest of the Council, the attempts at destabilization in eastern Ukraine. Furthermore, we call on Russia to stop trapping itself in a spiral to extremes that can lead only to tragedy. It must withdraw its troops from the border. It must cease its destabilizing activities. It must stop shouting about an immiment civil war. No one is deceived by the scenario of the arsonist firefighter — an unsubtle picture and not even a real semblance of credibility.

The situation is now extremely serious. A meeting that will bring together Russia, the United States, the European Union and Ukraine will be held in Geneva tomorrow. That event is crucial, and we call on parties to remain calm and to exercise restraint. In the case of failure or if Russia were to seek to avoid that meeting, new sanctions would be inevitable. That is not our preferred path. We will be firm. Fully legitimate authorities must be established in Kyiv. Elections must be held on 25 May, and we will not allow Russia either to prevent them from taking place or to discredit them.

Ms. Paik Ji-ah (Republic of Korea): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Šimonović for his briefing.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our full support for the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine. We are confident that such independent and credible international mechanisms can contribute to the de-escalation of tensions on the ground. We hope that the United Nations monitoring mission, in close cooperation with the special monitoring mission of the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, will continue to play a constructive role in that process.

The recent report of the United Nations monitoring mission raises a number of human rights concerns in Ukraine. There have been credible allegations of harassment, arbitrary arrests and torture, targeting journalists and activists. In Crimea, the referendum was marred by a significant increase in propaganda and incitement to hatred and violence. We are especially concerned that such distorted narratives and restriction of media freedom are also being exploited in eastern Ukraine to further exacerbate the tense and vulnerable situation.

We are closely monitoring unfolding events in eastern Ukraine and are alarmed by the violent seizure of key public buildings by armed individuals. Such instances point to a serious deterioration in the situation. We condemn any use of force in seeking a change is status. Any further incitement to hostility and provocative actions aimed at destabilizing Ukraine must stop.

With the important election scheduled in May, we call on the Ukrainian Government to lead an inclusive political process that reflects the region's diversity and ensures the protection of all ethnic and linguistic minorities. That is esential for any sustainable solution to the crisis.

Before concluding, we stress that a solution to the crisis can be found only by exploring all diplomatic efforts, especially bilateral dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. In that regard, we welcome the forthcoming Geneva meeting among Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the European Union and encourage all concerned parties to continue such efforts to seek a peaceful political solution.

We once again reaffirm our full supprt for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of its internationally recognized borders. Ukraine's future must be steered solely by the will and aspirations of Ukrainians themselves without intervention or influence by outside forces.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by thanking Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for his briefing on the human rights situation in Ukraine.

What else can we say except to reiterate that Argentina is following with great concern the increasingly tense situation in Ukraine, in particular in the eastern part of the country, and its potential consequences for the region's stability? What more is there to say that to reiterate that we are deeply concerned that the threat of violent clashes may mean paying a heavy price and hamper the possibility of finding a way out of the current crisis and of stabilizing the situation in the country?

The delegation of Argentina therefore reaffirms once again our belief that we must uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular that of non-intervention — be it military, political or economic — in the internal affairs of other States. We understand that the actions of any State or international organization must show due respect for Ukraine's management of its internal affairs and its future.

As Mr. Šimonović informed the Council, human rights violations were reported in Ukraine in the lead-up to the protests of November 2013. Serious human rights violations were also committed during the protests and afterwards. Although the report notes that denunciations of human rights violations have eased off since the new authorities in Kyiv assumed power, serious concerns remain among sectors of the population with regard to respect for the rights of minorities, and those concerns and fears have been raised as a result of certain attacks or threats against various minorities. Undoubtedly we need to have more information and we must continue to follow those events closely.

In that context, the availability of impartial information on the human rights situation will contribute not just to ensuring accountability for human rights violations and abuses, but will also help to prevent any manipulation of such information, which would only exacerbate a climate of impunity, insecurity and violence. At the same time, we believe that the exhaustive investigation into the violations and abuses that have taken place since the beginning of the protests in Maidan Square, regardless of who the perpetrators are, and the sentencing of those individuals will help to restore calm and foster institutional normalization which is needed in Ukraine. Measures undoubtedly need to be taken to build confidence among the various regions and ethnic communities and provide security to all Ukrainians throughout the country that their primary concerns and legitimate demands will be addressed. We must also end the incitement to hatred, discrimination, hostility and violence.

We are not saying anything new as a delegation. We are simply recognizing the difficult situation in Ukraine, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions. We insist on the need to avoid any action that would make the situation even more complex and complicate the search for a peaceful political solution to the crisis. All the parties must work together to calm the situation, must show maximum restraint and must contribute to an inclusive dialogue.

What can those of us who hope that those who will be meeting in Geneva on 17 April will have a constructive dialogue and that they will find a peaceful political solution to the crisis? As members of the international community, we can do a great deal. We can hope that the much-needed meeting of 17 April will take place in a different climate. Those of us who will not attend that meeting must make sure that we do not detract from it. We must recall that human rights are not anyone's property but everyone's responsibility. We must recall that the Charter of the United Nations is not made up of isolated chapters or loose principles, but is rather an unbreakable whole. With that positive attitude, we express our desire for a positive discussion to be held so that Ukraine can find the serenity it so sorely needs.

Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Mr. Ivan Šimonović, for his briefing to the Council on the human rights situation in Ukraine, as well as for his efforts and those of the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine. The delegation of Jordan would also like to underscore its support for the mission's work and the importance for all parties to cooperate with it in carrying out the recommendations contained in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Ukraine, particularly in light of the delicate and sensitive situation experienced by the country.

The report reveals the direct relationship between the widespread and significant human rights violations, including the right to freedom of expression, the previous Government's corruption, and the protests and insecurity that have swept Ukraine since November 2013. Attacks on the protesters, particularly in Maidan Square, and the use of excessive force against them have led to rapid political changes in Ukraine, the establishment of a transitional Government and the appointment of an acting President. The tense situation in eastern Ukraine as a result of the ongoing rebel movement must be addressed responsibly and reasonably by all parties. As we have said previously, the Ukrainian Government has the right and is duty-bound to end the rebellion and preserve the country's territorial integrity and unity. Given the current situation, all efforts must be made to ensure as peaceful a settlement to the rebellion as possible.

International norms and human rights must be respected in imposing the rule of law in those regions. We underscore our call to bring pressure to bear on the rebels to end their protests and engage in dialogue with the Government in Kyiv on all matters related to Ukraine's future. By the same token, we welcome the convening of the quadripartite meeting in Geneva tomorrow, which we hope will lead to the proposal of suitable solutions to end the crisis and persuade the stakeholders to de-escalate the situation and work to restore stability and security in Ukraine.

The current situation in Ukraine requires urgent measures to be adopted and steps taken to build confidence among all parties. It is necessary to limit extremist national and political diatribes. We call upon influential Powers to use their sway to end to the problem, which underpins current events in Ukraine, especially in the eastern regions. We also underscore the need for continued dialogue between the Government of Ukraine and the country's diverse communities, factions, linguistic groups and political parties in order to agree an appropriate political course of action that addresses the interests of all parties and charts a path for Ukraine's future with regard to the rule of law, its institutions and human rights.

The dialogue must begin forthwith. States and influential parties must also create a climate conducive to the successful holding of presidential elections in May. Ukraine's future depends on a successful political transition that is based on human rights, sovereignty and the rule of law and that represents all parts of society, without regard to language, ethnicity or religion.

We stress that there must be no interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine, or threat of force and that the people of Ukraine will be allowed to determine their own future. The international community must assist Ukraine at this stage of its political transition to overcome the obstacles to security and stability and preserve its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this briefing on the human rights situation in Ukraine. I thank Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for his briefing and for his efforts in reporting and ensuring human rights in Ukraine.

The report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued yesterday indicates worrying patterns of human rights violations, mainly born of the current crisis. The report also indicates a culture of effective impunity, including torture, extortion, arbitrary detention and corruption. It is unfortunate that the situation has bloomed into a deadly crisis in which over 120 people have lost their lives due to gunfire and severe beatings, while 100 remain missing.

The situation in Ukraine again proves that there are fault lines in our preventive measures. Nonetheless, it is our view that the international community still has a chance to prevent a further deterioration of the situation in Ukraine. We again welcome the establishment of a United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, which we support. We believe that we can build on the work of the mission to support Ukraine in its efforts to build the State that Ukrainians deserve.

It is incumbent on the Ukrainian Government and indeed a priority to build confidence between the authorities and the people and among the various communities, with a view to reassuring all people throughout Ukraine that their concerns will be addressed, especially the Russian-speaking community. It is time to ensure the inclusion and equal participation of all Ukrainians in public affairs, rather than adopting legislation regarding a lustration policy that would lead to further isolation and radicalism.

In eastern Ukraine, the situation on the ground has deteriorated in the past few days, instigating a dire need for a viable political solution. We express concern about the seizure and illegal occupation of public buildings and infrastructure by armed protestors, and stress the need for security forces to avoid any excessive use of force while restoring the necessary public order.

In the meantime, we are extremely concerned by the increased rhetoric and negative propaganda that have exacerbated a situation, and in some cases driven decisions taken to prevent the possibility of stakeholders reconciling. Once again, we reiterate our call on all parties to de-escalate the crisis and engage in genuine dialogue, with respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. In that regard, we look forward to the talks among Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United States of America to be held tomorrow in Geneva. We hope that the meeting will contribute to a sustainable political solution in Ukraine and the region.

Let me conclude by saying that the people of Ukraine will judge us by our action, or lack of action. Failing them is not an option. It is time to support a truly Ukrainian-led solution, with the support of the region and the larger international community.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, for his briefing.

The discussions of recent weeks in the Council have shown that not all members have the same assessment of the situation in Ukraine. We have often witnessed here a dialogue of the deaf, while an information war is raging on the ground. Given that backdrop, Luxembourg welcomes the publication yesterday of the first report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, including Crimea, by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report, based on eyewitness accounts, has provided an objective picture of the situation. I thank Mr. Šimonović for the topical information he has just provided the Council, in addition to the report.

The report and Mr. Šimonović's briefing paint a very bleak picture of the situation in Crimea. The consequences of the annexation to Russia for people living in Crimea are dire. That is especially true for minorities, such as the Crimean Tatars, who have had to leave the peninsula out of fear of violent repression, and for Ukrainians themselves, who have are subjected to flagrant discrimination if they refuse to adopt Russian citizenship.

The report confirms that the referendum held on 16 March in Crimea, in violation of the Constitutions of both Ukraine and Crimea, was held in conditions devoid of any legitimacy. Crimea was occupied and cut off from the rest of Ukraine, journalists and members of civil society were intimidated, and freedom of the media was severely hampered. Cases of torture, forced disappearance and murder must be the subject of independent judicial investigation. Urgent measures are needed to restore the rule of law and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. I join my colleagues

who have stressed the importance of providing United Nations representatives with access to the entire territory of Ukraine, including Crimea. This applies in particular to the members of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission.

With the report of the High Commissioner, we now have confirmation of what Mr. Šimonović told the Council on 19 March (see S/PV.7144) — there have been no systematic or widespread attacks against "the ethnic Russian community" in Ukraine. Yet the unfounded rumors of threats of such attacks continue to be exploited to foment unrest in eastern and south-eastern Ukraine. Russian media are systematically used to create a climate of fear and rouse local populations against the Ukrainian Government. Luxembourg therefore endorses the appeal launched yesterday by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, on measures to be taken to counter propaganda and misinformation. The current situation is explosive. It would be irresponsible to further fan the flames.

Luxembourg condemns the actions carried out since 6 April by armed groups in several cities in eastern and south-eastern Ukraine, especially in the Donetsk region. Those actions lack all spontaneity. They are coordinated and well-orchestrated, akin to what happened in Crimea. We are particularly concerned by the targeted deployment of pro-Russia individuals in the local demonstrations, as noted in the High Commissioner's report. We are not challenging the right to demonstrate freely, but the deployment of pro-Russia elements has led to violent incidents and the forceful occupation of Government buildings and local law-enforcement institutions. We call on Russia to publicly distance itself from the actions of the separatist militias.

We pay tribute to the outstanding composure and restraint shown by the Ukrainian authorities in the face of these destabilizing actions. We understand that they cannot fail to act in the situation. We encourage the Ukrainian Government to proceed in a measured and proportional manner, with full respect for human rights.

Luxembourg still believes that a peaceful solution to the crisis can be found. Such a solution would require direct dialogue between Russia and Ukraine. We hope that the four-party talks that will bring together chief negotiators from Ukraine, Russia, the United States and the European Union in Geneva tomorrow will allow for a dialogue to be initiated and a way out of the most dangerous crisis that Europe has faced since the end of the Cold War to be found.

Pending a political solution, the presence throughout Ukraine of impartial United Nations and OSCE observers is crucial to establishing the facts and countering warmongering rhetoric. We encourage the human rights observer mission to redouble its efforts in that respect. As the Secretary General of the OSCE stated in Brussels today, to observe in a neutral manner and report on the facts is to help establish the conditions for a de-escalation of this dangerous situation.

Mr. Llanos (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Šimonović for his briefing on the human rights situation in Ukraine.

Chile supports the appeal made by Mr. Šimonović to ensure accountability for all human rights violations committed during the demonstrations in Kyiv that took place between December 2013 and February 2014. It is crucial that immediate measures be adopted to build trust between the interim Government and the population, while taking into account ethnic minorities in particular. Similarly, it is urgent to guarantee full respect for the rule of law, democracy and human rights in Ukraine, including the rights of all minorities.

We are particularly disturbed by the deterioration of the human rights situation in the eastern region of Ukraine, in particular violations of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly through attacks against and the harassment of activists, journalists and members of the political opposition. We urge the parties to find a peaceful solution to the crisis through direct political dialogue, to act with moderation, to abstain from adopting any unilateral measures that may increase tensions and to take part in international mediation efforts in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/262. We hope that the meeting to be held tomorrow in Geneva, in which Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United States will take part, will help find a way out of the crisis.

I would conclude by welcoming the good offices that the Secretary-General continues to carry out and by highlighting the work of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on establishing the facts, reducing tensions and creating

an environment conducive to the holding of presidential elections on 25 May.

The President: I shall now make a few remarks in my national capacity.

I also want to thank Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Šimonović for his briefing on the human rights situation in Ukraine. We have studied the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine and note that it is comprehensive.

We are encouraged by the relentless and consistent engagement of the United Nations in Ukraine. That is exemplified by the establishment of the United Nations human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, the readiness of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide testimonial assistance for legislative reforms and the recent high-level visits by the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Feltman, Senior Adviser Robert Serry and Mr. Šimonović.

We believe in the central role of the United Nations in de-escalating tensions in Ukraine. The United Nations provides an impartial platform and professional expertise, which are both essential ingredients in the efforts to ensure that human rights are respected and protected in Ukraine. Independent monitoring and analysis of the human rights situation will outline technical, legal or other assistance needs and may contribute to addressing the root causes of the violence. The human rights issues linked to the current crisis in Ukraine need to be comprehensively addressed within the framework of a peaceful and negotiated resolution of the crisis. The authorities must continue to engage all groups in the country and assure them that their concerns will be addressed.

The ongoing rebellion in eastern Ukraine flagrantly rubs salt in the wound and exacerbates an already tenuous political situation, with far-reaching implications for human rights, peace and security. We all know that it is an established fact that violations of human rights often occur in situations of conflict. That underscores the imperative for a speedy political and diplomatic resolution of the crisis in Ukraine. We urge all concerned parties to cease beating the drums of war. They must work assiduously to ease the escalating tensions and embrace dialogue and all its ramifications, for the larger interests of the people of Ukraine. All of us around this table have expressed the hope that the meeting to take place tomorrow, 17 April, will lead to a resolution of the crisis. I hope that our hopes are not misplaced. I hope that our hopes will be justified.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting of the Security Council to discuss the report on the human rights situation in Ukraine. I am grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Ivan Šimonović for presenting the report today.

Today's meeting is being held with the following fact on everyone's mind: it is only because of the Russian military aggression, which should be unimaginable in the twenty-first century yet is unfolding in plain sight, that the situation in Ukraine has emerged on the Council's agenda. Ukraine welcomes the publication of the report, which reflects the situation in my country in the field of human rights objectively enough.

Unlike the previous Administration, the new Government in Ukraine is willing and ready to embrace recommendations aimed at promoting human rights and the rule of law in our country. At the same time, we hope that the other Government mentioned in the report will also take specific actions to stop and prevent human rights violations.

The document strongly rejects the allegations of violations of the rights of Russian minorities in Ukraine, which were used as a reason for Russia's military aggression against our country and the annexation of Crimea, which was declared illegal by the General Assembly.

My Russian colleague stated today that the Russian language is in danger in Ukraine. Let me give the Council some comparative figures on the situation concerning the protection of the language rights of the several million Ukrainians in the Russian Federation and the Russians in Ukraine. These figures are based on the report of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's High Commissioner on National Minorities, dated March-April 2009. I ask members to please compare the figures.

On secondary schools, there are no Ukrainian secondary schools in the Russian Federation for at least 2 million people. In Ukraine, there are 101,256 Russian secondary schools.

On publications, seven Ukrainian newspapers are published at the expense of the local authorities and Ukrainian organizations of the Russian Federation. Financial support at the federal level is not provided to ensure the information needs of the Ukrainian community in the Russian Federation. There are 1,176 newspapers published in the Russian language in Ukraine.

On broadcasting, there is only one Ukrainian broadcast radio programme in Russia. Russian language television and radio programmes in Ukraine consists of about 74 per cent of the total broadcasts in Ukraine.

The Russian Permanent Representative today stated that there was growing anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism in Ukraine. And the Russian side is concerned about the fact that this is not reflected in today's human rights report. Allow me to quote some excerpts from the joint letter addressed not long ago to Russian President Vladimir Putin by an association made up of 266 Jewish organizations in Ukraine.

> "The speculation about the violent Ukrainization and the prohibition to speak in Russian, which was always stressed in the Russian media, should remain on these authors' conscience. Mr. President, your confidence expressed on the growth of anti-Semitism in Ukraine does not meet the real facts. Perhaps you were confused, indicating Ukraine instead of Russia, where Jewish organizations have documented the growth of anti-Semitism last year.
>
> "We were and still we are being frightened by the fact that Bandera followers and fascists are rushing to power in Ukraine, and we should expect the Jewish pogroms. Yes, we are aware that political opposition and the social powers that achieved positive changes in the executive branch of the country are made up of different groups. The nationalists are among them, but even the most marginal of them do not allow themselves to express anti-Semitism and other forms of xenophobia. And what we know is that our nationalists are under the control of civil society and the new Government of Ukraine, which is not the case with the Russian neo-Nazis, who are encouraged by your secret services".

Today our Russian colleague also touched upon the case concerning Mr. Tsarev and Mr. Dobkin as candidates in the presidential election. I am authorized to say that we condemn all forms of violence, especially when it concerns opposition leaders and candidates for President. In that context, work must be done by the police, who are obliged to carry out a proper investigation and to submit it to the court. Today, the Ukrainian Parliament considered those cases, and we expect that they will be assessed and that the Office of the Prosecutor will then comment.

I would also like to note something interesting in that situation. Coupled with the aggressive actions against Ukraine, that situation cannot be excluded as provocation from our opponents. I point out that Mr. Tsarev was attacked by unknown assailants. Those who rescued him were from the Right Sector — precisely the forces that Russia has consistently accused of demonstrating extreme intolerance towards it. Mr. Tsarev openly thanked the representatives of that group for rescuing him. This story was broadcast widely by Ukraine's main news channels. Russian television channels showed only part of that interview. We have the full version on a disk and will give it to our Russian colleagues.

We call on the States Members of the United Nations to take close note of the human rights violations detailed in the report before and during the Crimea pseudo-referendum of 16 March. The include harassment, arbitrary arrests, torture, violations of the freedom of expression, media freedom, access to information and the protection of journalists. Particular attention is rightly given to violations of the rights of the inhabitants of the peninsula under the Russian occupation. The most vulnerable communities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are considered to be the Crimean Tartars and Ukrainians, who were intimidated and forced to leave their homes because of the lack of a safe environment and the oppression of their rights and freedoms. Tartar leaders consider the situation as the third act of genocide against their ethnic group in the past century.

Given the ongoing systematic violations of human rights on the Crimean peninsula, the Ukrainian side insists that the situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea should remain under the radar of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and its mission and other international monitoring mechanisms. In that respect, we welcome the intention of the United Nations monitoring mission to establish its sub-office in Simferopol.

Mindful of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 68/262, entitled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", is is alarming that — along with an analysis of recent developments and factors in the eastern regions of Ukraine — the document reports on external interference in the situation, in particular the participation in the protests and clashes by individuals who arrived from Russia. At the Security Council meeting held on Sunday, 13 April (see S/PV.7154), we gave some facts about such interference. One can find much more evidence by visiting the official site of the Ukrainian Secret Service.

Ukraine is surprised that the only criticism of the peace enforcement operation in Ukraine comes from the Russian Federation. The Council will recall that this country is one of the most frequent users of counter-terrorism tools against its citizens. I would like to draw the Council's attention to the fact that Russia uses the same strategy in all counter-terrorism operations: if the enemy does not surrender, it is stormed at any cost. Dozens of examples could be given. The enforcement operation in Ukraine is being undertaken to protect people and to restore law and order in some regions of Ukraine. The operation is targeted exclusively at armed groups who are committing acts of a criminal nature, including the seizure of administrative buildings, police and military facilities and airports. Those armed groups are strongly supported by the Russian special operations force units, illegally infiltrated into the territory of Ukraine.

My Russian colleague mentioned today that the the first blood has been spilled in eastern Ukraine, that of five Ukrainian peace enforcement officers who were killed in a well-prepared attack overseen by the Russian officer Ihor Strielkov.The Council can find detailed information on the website of the Ukrainian Secret Service: www.sbu.gov.ua.

It is in that light that we look forward to the mission's next report, which will focus on eastern Ukraine.

United Nations experts have stated clearly that a number of human rights violations in other parts of Ukraine were a legacy of the previous Government, which became one of the main reasons that caused the Ukrainian mass protests that took place from November 2013 to February 2014. The reasons posing a challenge for decades to human rights in Ukraine generally, and in its eastern and southern regions in particular, are well known, that is, poverty, a high level of child mortality, unemployment and dangerous working conditions, especially in the coal-mining industry. As a result, basic human rights and principles outlined in the Constitution of Ukraine were not always respected in my country.

The only way Ukraine can cope with those problems is to dramatically change its inherited status quo in order to build an open, democratic civil society. The newly formed Parliament and Government of Ukraine have repeatedly stated their commitment to reforms designed to eliminate those vestiges of the past, and we are grateful to the authors of the report for noting positive trends in the new Ukrainian authorities' activities that indicate their willingness to ensure a break with past injustices and elaborate a new vision of Ukraine's future. The action plan for the Government presented by the new Cabinet covers the problems of each and every region of Ukraine. It focuses on the practical needs of the population, including ethnic minorities. What we need, in order to achieve those goals, is to be left in peace by Russia.

We greatly appreciate the role the United Nations is playing in normalizing the situation in Ukraine, and we are ready to enhance our cooperation with its human rights bodies in order to give proper consideration to human rights issues in implementing our wide-ranging reforms. Those reforms are aimed at ensuring the rule of law, developing a democratic, pluralistic society, eliminating corruption, complying with social standards and protecting the rights of minorities. The real watershed in this process will be the presidential elections to be held in Ukraine on 25 May. We are determined to have them whatever the circumstances, and to make them the most transparent elections in the history of independent Ukraine.

I thank the Council for its support and understanding.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I feel compelled to pause on various assertions that my Ukrainian colleague just made in his statement. I cannot analyse his entire statement, particularly since it is impossible to figure out which parts of his speech are his own and which parts are borrowed from some mystery source, the when and where of whose proclamations are unknown. In any case, of course, he is responsible for everything that was said.

We will not discuss the situation in Crimea in the Security Council, or at least not under the rubric of the situation in Ukraine. But he made one assertion that is simply crude provocation that I cannot ignore, which is that the Tatar population of Crimea believes there will be a third act in the history of genocide against them, and so forth. That is simply nonsense, and a crude provocation. The new Constitution that has already been adopted in Crimea, for instance, actually strengthens Tatar as a third official language in Crimea, which it never was before, alongside Russian and Ukrainian. High-level positions in Crimea's ministerial departments have been reserved for representatives of the Tatars, which was also not the case previously.

Moreover, the Crimean Tatars will be able to take advantage of the fact that not only will their social, economic and other issues be dealt with by the Russian authorities, who are giving them the attention they need, but that this will be done with the help of Tatarstan, one of the strongest, most powerful and successful subjects of the Russian Federation. An agreement between the Russian and Tatarstan authorities to work together on this issue is already in place. The Council therefore has no need to worry about the fate of the Crimean Tatars. Over the past two and a half decades since Ukraine became independent, the Crimean Tatars have struggled with what we in Russian call a wretched existence. That condition will now come to an end, although it will probably take some time.

Turning now to another topic that is not appropriate for the Security Council, but my Ukrainian colleague wrongly characterized what I said about the Russian language in Ukraine. What I said was that the Russian language is gradually being pushed out of circulation. And that is exactly the case. The first step that Mr. Sergeyev's new leadership took was to shut down the Russian-language versions of all its ministerial department websites. He cited a great many figures; I have one. According to my information, of the 195 Russian schools that existed in Kyiv in the 1990s, five remain. In order to enter any Ukrainian university, a candidate has to do an interview in Ukrainian. While Ukrainian is close to Russian, it is still a language that has to be studied separately, so Russians have to struggle with Ukrainian in order to get through the university entrance interview. However, this is a major subject that deserves separate discussion and consideration, which would include the rights of Ukrainians in Russia. Of course, Ukrainians in Russia do not all live in a compact area, unlike the Russians living in Ukraine.

I would now like to say a few words about the statements made by some of my other colleagues in the Security Council. Needless to say, many aspects of our discussion are reminiscent of a broken record, and indeed we have already gone over this subject a dozen times, but some things said by my colleagues today were genuinely startling. For example, our British colleague said that Russia should explain its concerns. We have made numerous statements at the highest levels. We have explained our concerns at the level of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our United Nations delegation has repeatedly gone into great detail in spelling out our vision of how we — together with the Ukrainians and those members of the international community who are ready to do so — propose to work to help Ukraine extricate itself from this crisis. But some people are still sitting there, waiting for us to explain our concerns. Maybe they are simply not listening; or perhaps they do not want to listen. That is quite another issue.

Turning to the second aspect of this issue, it is of course good that our concerns are listened to and understood, but the important thing is to understand the concerns of the people of Ukraine, and in this case to understand the concerns of the people of south-eastern and southern Ukraine. What has the Kyiv leadership of Ukraine done to listen to their concerns? Mr. Yatsenyuk visited the Donbas region. He did not even meet with any of the protesters. He met with his friends, with oligarchs — people whom the Kyiv leadership has appointed to various positions. It is true that he did say some of the right things, which later were essentially contradicted by his colleague Mr. Turchynov, who on the following day said that military force should be used against the south-eastern region.

I now turn to the statement made by my respected colleague from the United States. She said something quite true, which is that it is not good when an opposition takes up arms and seizes administrative buildings. It is annoying, however, that this understanding on the part of the United States representative has come too late. For instance, why was it not expressed in January, when Kyiv was in turmoil that was several degrees more intense than what we are seeing in the cities of eastern Ukraine. Why did the representative of the United States not say the same things here in the United Nations, in Washington, D.C., or in its numerous talks with the Kyiv authorities? Perhaps then this crisis would not have occurred. Of course it is not good when citizens take up arms, but in Kyiv, when the issue of illegal units came up, one statistic emerged to the effect that

there were 3 million illegal firearms in Ukraine. But when people are worried about their well-being and are trying to defend themselves somehow, how can they not arm themselves? That is undoubtedly understandable, although from the point of view of lawfulness, in the normal sense of the word, it naturally raises questions.

My French colleague brought up an excellent phrase, "virtual reality". Indeed, I found myself thinking about just that phrase when I was listening to the statements of some of our colleagues. People have come to power in Kyiv by military means. Many of them have the sort of reputation that would make you think twice about shaking their hands. In 2012, the European Parliament resolved that there was no way any coalition could be struck with them. They seem to make promises of some sort, but they do not keep any of them. For instance, they undertook to disarm people in Kyiv. They did not do so. Were any objective investigations conducted into the violence that took place in Kyiv in February, and perhaps in the crisis that was ongoing before that? A Prosecutor General appeared who was also a representative of a political party and said that the former authorities were to blame for everything. And some of them are making promises to the outside world, and they believe them. Are they so naive?

It is interesting that this is not the first time we have seen this in the past few years. For some reason, some of our Western colleagues believe that if an armed coup — preferably an armed one — takes place, democrats will always come to power — that Thomas Jefferson will always take charge of the whole thing. But where do we see anybody in Kyiv in power who might have a serious reputation in democratic politics? There are no such people there. Have these pseudo-democrats done anything to ensure that something resembling democracy will emerge even in Kyiv? In the Verkhovna Rada there are nothing but fistfights. Anyone who protests is forcibly ejected. Just as there were before, there are military camps on the Maidan; none of the far right-wingers have been disarmed. And these democrats, having failed to establish any kind of democracy in their stronghold in Kyiv, are now seeking to establish democracy — or law and order, as some of our colleagues have said — by sending armed forces into south-eastern Ukraine. There is your virtual reality.

A number of my colleagues have approvingly mentioned the elections of 25 May. They are being prepared for, and we do not know how it will all get done, but who is worrying about that here? I have to agree with my Ukrainian colleague — I do not recall exactly what he said — that there must be a radical break with the accursed past, a radical change. But now the Ukrainian people are being asked to buy a pig in a poke. They are being told to go and elect a president on 25 May, but the kind of power that president will wield is completely unclear. What sort of Government will he preside over? Will he have the greater authority or will the Prime Minister? That was clearly the logical path for the intended agreement of 21 February — start out with constitutional reforms, then follow those with presidential elections. But no, that has all been turned on its head and some elections for deputies are being pushed forward. Is this really democracy? Is this really the way to a break with the past and the building of a new democratic Ukraine?

Last of all, regarding the negotiations in Geneva — which we hope will take place — we are preparing diligently for them, if they are not torpedoed by these reckless activities of forces in south-eastern Ukraine. But how will Ukraine prepare for the negotiations? How will our Western partners prepare for it? That is an important question for us. It may not be a big secret, but as some of our colleagues know, we have tried through various formats to find a way to involve representatives of the region. Since the authorities themselves are incapable of launching a dialogue, we thought it might be done through this format. But the response to our proposal was negative. Let us see what will come of the Geneva meeting. Of course, we would hope that it would genuinely put Ukraine on a path to normal development whereby every region, every ethnic and religious group would know what to expect tomorrow. And then at that point we will be able to address Ukraine's economic problems. We have invited our partners to participate in a dialogue on that subject, including through the letter that, as we know, President Putin sent to a number of Heads of European States.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine to make a further statement.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I have come to realize that it is sometimes useless to comment on certain things, since our Russian colleagues will stand by their opinion and represent the situation the way they want, regardless.

That is the reason for the virtual reality that our Russian colleagues have constructed, where they live in their own world while everyone else says the same

thing. Whether Mr. Churkin wants to or not, he will have to take part in a discussion of the issue of Crimea because it is Ukrainian territory. It may be temporarily occupied, but until it is returned we will discuss it. We have seen the entire world lend its support for Ukraine on this subject.

It is a shame that the Russian Ambassador should use such language as "lies" and so forth when commenting on his colleagues' words. It is a shame that neither he nor his deputies attended the Security Council's meeting with the delegation from the Crimea, led by the well-known human rights champion Mustafa Dzhemilev, who spent 15 years in Soviet prisons for defending the rights of his people. He said what I said when I repeated his words, which the Russian Ambassador called lies and provocations. So the Crimean Tartars will now hear that the Russians consider their position to be mere lies and provocations.

I have no further comment, because everything said to date consists yet again of manipulation and distortion in a style we are all familiar with. I think Council members for their attention, their support and their patience..

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.